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ABSTRACT

This study examined both general and specific parent-child television viewing experiences together with any interactions related to television viewing whether the child has watched television with a parent or alone. A total of 384 telephone interviews of parents (57% female, 43% male) with children at home between the ages of 6 and 18 were conducted in a major midwest market. The questionnaire elicited information on: general patterns of both individual and joint (parent-child) exposure to television; general patterns of parent-child conversations about television; specific parent-child TV-related conversations recalled from the previous evening; and relevant demographic and communication variables. Respondents reported watching television with their child an average of 4 days per week; one in three (34%) said every day. Most (59%) said that when they watched television with their child, it was because they both wanted to watch at the same time. Parents appeared to have ambivalent feelings toward talking about TV with their child. While 79% said that it was at least somewhat important and 30% said very important, relatively few reported really enjoying such conversations. In addition, children did not appear to talk with their parents about the programs they watched alone; 53% said such discussion occurred, at most, occasionally. These findings suggest that the form and content of television may serve to minimize rather than facilitate communication among co-viewers, although the frequency, duration, and quality of conversations about television may be no different than other non-television related conversations between parents and children. Additional survey and experimental examinations are called for to continue to collect data on television's role in the context of family relationships. A bibliography and five data tables complete the document. (JB)

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Parent-Child Communication About Television: A View From the Parent's Perspective

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The fact that family members spend the bulk of their available leisure time at home watching television suggests that use of the medium could have significant consequences for the family (Robinson, 1981). Given that a relatively large proportion of television viewing is done with other family members (Friedson, 1953; Halloran, Brown, & Chaney, 1970; Robertson, 1979; Schramm, Lyle, & Parker, 1961), it seems probable that the activity of watching television may affect interpersonal behaviors within the family--especially at the parent-child level. Assuming the articulation of responses to shared stimuli is valued by family members, communication about television represents an activity capable of nurturing intrafamily relationships. Even if not particularly valued by the child, parental comments about television programs can serve to mediate TV's impact on the child, often reducing many potentially deleterious effects of exposure (Corder-Bolz, 1982; Huesmann, 1982).

Although the research evidence is rather sparse, there is reason to suspect that the presence of television may facilitate parent-child interaction. Research has shown that children and adolescents often are eager to talk about what they have seen on television (Chaffee & Tims, 1976; Lyle & Hoffman, 1972; Reid & Frazer, 1980). In the co-viewing situation, television can provide topics of conversation for the family (Riley, Cantwell, & Rutiger, 1949; Williams, Smart, & Epstein, 1979) offering the child viewer an abundant source of characters and themes which can serve as illustrations for conveying to the parent those real-world experiences which would otherwise be difficult to verbalize (Lull, 1980). It has been observed that television often serves to guide the accessibility of family members to one another (Faber, Brown, & McLeod, 1979; Lull, 1980) and often increases the occurrence of interaction among family members (Thompson & Slater, 1983). In addition, it has been suggested that parent-child television-related

interactions may prove beneficial in the child's cognitive and emotional development (Messaris & Sarett, 1981).

On the other hand, there is also evidence which suggests that the television viewing activity may restrict parent-child interaction. In particular, increased viewing has been associated with increased conflict among family members (Rosenblatt & Cunningham; 1976), and decreased familial communication (Brody, Stoneman, & Sanders, 1980). Others have found that interaction among family members declines while the set is turned on (Robinson, 1972), collective viewing often does not lead to communication among family members (Jeffries-Fox & Gerbner, 1977), and that there is generally little discussion concerning the programs to be viewed on the main family television set with the father most often acting alone (i.e., without discussion with other family members) during the program selection process (Lull, 1982). Finally, work on television as a babysitter (Gantz, 1982; Gantz and Masland, 1983) suggests that parents make little effort to talk about programs viewed alone by the child; much of what was viewed by the child appears to go undiscussed between parent and child.

While these studies provide valuable insight into some of the effects of television viewing on interpersonal behavior between parent and child, there appears to be little empirical information available on the degree to which parents and children actually talk about the television they watch. Specifically, several important questions remain to be addressed:

1. How often do parents and children talk about what the child has seen on television without the parent?

2. How often do parent-child conversations about television occur while both are watching TV together?

3. What is the nature of these conversations - who initiates them, how long do they last, what are they about?

4. What role does the content of the television program play in such interactions?

Parent-child communication about television may--or may not--reflect more generalized patterns of communication between parents and children. It has been argued and assumed that families have norms or styles of communication (McLeod et al, 1966). As such, communicating about TV ought to reflect interaction patterns about a variety of ideas or objects. While recently subjected to careful methodological scrutiny (Tims and Masland, 1983), Chaffee & McLeod's typology of family communication patterns has been used to document relationships between patterns of communication within the family and uses of television. For example, socio-oriented families (those placing greater emphasis on social harmony) appear more likely to use TV to achieve interpersonal and family goals (Lull, 1980); they also emphasize TV rules that relate to self-control (Frye and McCain, 1980). On the other hand, concept-oriented families (those more interested in the exposure to and expression of divergent views) appear less likely to use TV as a tool for maintaining family relations (Lull, 1980) but more likely as a means for discussing the broad implications of moral issues aired on TV programs (Messaris and Kerr, 1983).

In addition to differences based on family communication patterns, parent-child TV-related communication may be related to a host of demographic, TV viewing and attitudinal variables. The extent and type of rules parents use to govern their child's use of television appear to vary on the basis of the parent's gender and education as well as the age of the child (Bower, 1973, Mohr, 1979). How frequently parents co-view with their children appears functionally related to gender of the parent (Rossiter and Robinson, 1975). TV's use as babysitter has been shown to be related to the mother's own TV viewing behavior as well as to her attitudes about the value of TV for her children (Gantz, 1982). The literature, then, suggests that

patterns of parent-child TV-related conversations may vary considerably across families. As such, one additional question seems relevant:

5. To what extent do more generalized parent-child communication patterns , family demographics and parental attitudes about television relate to conversations about TV?

This report focuses on the television viewing and related communications parents report having with their children, examining both general as well as specific parent-child TV viewing experiences and related interactions. In doing so, it will provide an overview, at least from the parent's perspective, of responses to the five research questions posed above.

Methods

Telephone interviews were conducted in a major midwest market with parents having children living at home between the ages of 6 and 18. Telephone numbers were selected from the area's most recent telephone directory using systematic random sampling with replacement. One parent per household was interviewed. Calls were placed from a central location under the direct supervision of the authors.

A total of 384 interviews were conducted. More of those interviewed were women (57% female; 43% male). Aside from gender, the sample reflected demographic characteristics of both the market as well as of parents with young children; most of those interviewed were married presently (84%), in their 30s or 40s (83%) and worked at least part-time out of the home (75%).

Respondents were told the interview was designed to assess what parents and children have to say to each other about television. The questionnaire contained items addressing: general patterns of both individual and joint (parent-child) exposure to television; general patterns of parent-child conversations about television; specific parent-child TV-related conversations recalled from the previous evening; and, relevant demographic and

communication variables, including Chaffee and McLeod's measure of family communication patterns.

General patterns of parent-child TV-related communication were assessed with a series of ten close-ended questions. These focused on the initiation, frequency, type and interactive nature of such conversations prior to, during and following exposure to television. The following illustrate the questions asked:

> When those shows are <u>over</u>, how often do you and your child talk about what you've just watched together? Just about always, most of the time, half of the time, occasionally or just about never?
>
> When you and your son/daughter talk about television, how often does it simply involve your child quickly telling you what he/she just watched <u>without</u> any request for you to respond? Just about always, most of the time, half of the time, occasionally or just about never?
>
> How often do these conversations involve <u>you</u> asking your son/daughter questions about the program? Just about always, most of the time, half of the time, occasionally or just about never?
>
> How often do <u>you</u> try to relate the TV story to something in real life? Just about always, most of the time, half of the time, occasionally or just about never?

Both closed and open-ended questions were used to ascertain the nature of parent-child TV-related conversations the parent recalled from the previous evening. Here, interviewers first recorded the programs respondents reported watching with their child the previous evening. These programs later were coded into one of 17 categories (plus "other") derived from program typologies used by Nielsen and other television rating services. For each program, interviewers then recorded the number of conversations the respondent recalled occurring during the show. Finally, interviewers focused on the longest conversation for each program, assessing who initiated it, how long it lasted and what it was about. There, interviewers wrote verbatim accounts of the parent's account of the conversation. Those

accounts then were content analyzed and coded by the principle investigators. Discussions were classified on the basis of topic as well as apparent purpose of function. The unit of analysis was each comment offered by parent or child (e.g., parent said ". . ."; child said ". . ."). Each conversation, then, could have two entries in the analysis.

Family communication patterns were assessed with 10 items reflecting Chaffee and McLeod's typology. Parents were asked how often they said each to their children and were given four choices to select from: very often, sometimes, rarely or never. Concept orientation was measured with the following items:

Say that he/she should always look at both sides of an issue?

Say that getting his/her idea across is important even if others don't like it?

Ask for his/her opinion when the family is discussing something?

Say that every member of the family should have some say in family affairs?

Admit that kids know more about some things than adults do?

Socio orientation was measured with the following items:

Say that your ideas are correct and that he/she shouldn't argue with them?

Answer his/her argument by saying you'll know better when you grow up?

Say he/she should give in on arguments rather than risk making people angry?

Say that there are some things that just shouldn't be talked about?

Say that he/she shouldn't argue with adults?

Concept and socio orientation indices were computed by summing across the five items assessing each perspective. Cronbach's coefficient alphas for both the concept and socio dimensions were .68. Family types were constructed by using median splits on the concept and socio dimensions.

Finally, a battery of demographic questions (e.g., age, gender, education) were asked.

Results

General Parent-Child Viewing Habits

Respondents reported watching television with their child an average of four days per week; one in three (34%) said every day. More often than not, watching TV together appeared to be a spontaneous activity. Most (59%) said that when they watched television with their child, it was because they both wanted to watch at the same time. Fewer than one in four (23%) said they typically planned beforehand to watch TV with their child. Correspondingly, the shows watched together typically were what both parent and child wanted to see. Most (66%) said the programs viewed represented shared interests; more said the shows represented the child's tastes than only their own (16% to 9%). From the parent's perspective, then, parent-child TV viewing often was a spontaneous activity with program selection based on mutual viewing interests.

These parents appeared to have ambivalent feelings about talking about TV with their child. On one hand, most felt that talking about television shows with their child was an important thing to do; 79% said that was at least "somewhat important," with 30% saying "very important." On the other hand, relatively few reported really enjoying those conversations; fewer said they enjoyed talking about TV shows with their child "a lot" than said "a little" (22% to 31%). Moreover, almost everyone (91%) said they would prefer to talk about something else. This project did not assess what topics "something else" might represent.

Children generally did not appear to talk with their parents about the programs they watched alone; half (53%) said such discussions occurred, at

most, "occasionally." When such conversations occurred, the child typically (68%) took the initiative; few respondents typically began to talk about what the child watched without at least some prompting or prodding by the child. These general tendencies were echoed by the previous evening's communication behaviors reported by respondents. Among the nearly half (45%) who said their child watched some television without them the previous evening, most (82%) indicated not talking about those shows with their child. Again, when the conversations occurred, the child most often (72%) served as initiator.

Extent of Parent-Child Conversations about Television

When parents and children watched television together, conversations about anything were somewhat infrequent while the show was on. More respondents said they "never" or "occasionally" talked with their child while the show was on than said "most of the time" or "just about always" (43% to 38%). Respondents felt that conversations occurring during the show most likely were about the show itself; most (64%) said they "never" or only "occasionally" talked with their child about other things when they watched together. Although conversations while viewing were limited, parents and children initiated them with equal frequency. When asked how often they talked with their child about jointly viewed programs after those programs ended, about half (52%) said, at most, "occasionally." As with conversations while the programs were on, parents believed these conversations typically were initiated by both. At least in terms of sheer quantity, then, conversations about mutually watched programs appear somewhat limited.

The extent, content, and interactive quality of those parent-child conversations also appears to be restricted. More than half of these respondents (54%) felt that when their child talked to them about tele-

vision, it typically involved the child quickly reiterating what was just seen. Most (61%) felt their child "never" or "occasionally" asked questions about what was just viewed. Few felt their child attempted to relate the TV show to something in real life; 66% said that happened either "never" or "occasionally." Fewer felt their child frequently used television characters or TV content when trying to explain something to the parent; 82% said that happened either "never" or "occasionally." Parents appeared to infrequently stimulate those conversations. Most did not ask questions about what their child watched; 71% said they asked, at best, "occasionally." Similarly, few parents tried to relate TV stories to real life; 68% said they did so "never" or "occasionally." Typically, then, parent-child conversations about television appear to involve the mere reiteration of content without much probing, interaction or extension of the topic to real life situations and issues. (Table 1 summarizes responses to questions assessing TV-related conversations.)

Responses to these questions were factor analyzed (SPSS principal components with varimax rotation). Three factors emerged, accounting for 54% of the variance. (See Table 2). Factor 1 emphasized parent-child communication about the television programs viewed. Factor 2 focused on parent-child conversations that linked TV programs and characters to real life situations. Factor 3 highlighted general parent-child communication while watching TV (e.g., conversations other than about the programming being watched). Indices were computed using factor score coefficients. These indices were used for the analyses addressing the fifth research question that guided this investigation.

Previous Evening Parent-Child Viewing

Nearly half (43%) said they watched some television with their child the previous evening. (Of the remainder, 27% said their child did not watch

any television that evening after 6 PM; 30% said they simply didn't watch with their child when the child watched.) Only those able to recall at least one show watched with their child the previous evening were asked questions about those shows. This represented 84% of those who said they watched TV with their child the previous evening. A slight majority of these respondents (53%) recalled watching one show with their child; 36% recalled seeing two shows, 8% remembered three, with 4% recalling four programs. Movies/miniseries were viewed by the greatest number of parents and children (n = 35). This may have been a function of a popular miniseries (The Thorn Birds) broadcast while interviews were being conducted. Only four other types of programs were viewed by at least 10 different respondents and their children. These were family dramas (e.g., the Walton's) (n = 29), situation comedies (e.g. Mash, Love Sidney) (n = 17), sports (n = 13) and police/detective (e.g. Hart to Hart) (n = 11). Fewer than ten reported watching news programs, game shows or reality programs with their children and only a few mentioned children's educational programs, science, religion, situation dramas, science fiction or talk shows.

Previous Evening Parent-Child Conversation about Television

Responses about the programs parents recalled viewing with their children the previous evening provide a more detailed account of parent-child TV content related interactions. Parents recalled an average of 1.8 conversations with their child about each show watched together; 34% said they did not have any conversations when they watched together. The longest conversation for each program averaged around five minutes; the modal conversation lasted for about 60 seconds. Typically, children (74%) initiated the conversations that occurred while the show was being watched. The number of conversations reported per show varied somewhat across shows. Among program

types watched by at least ten respondents, sports seemed to generate the greatest number of interactions per show ($\bar{x}$ = 3.6). Situation comedies generated the least ($\bar{x}$ = 0.7). In between were movies/mini-series ($\bar{x}$ = 2.1), police/detective ($\bar{x}$ = 2.1), and family dramas ($\bar{x}$ = 1.8). Differences across show types may be a reflection of the content of the programming as well as the pacing and duration associated with each. (Table 3 provides an overview of these programs and conversations.)

Most comments (76%) centered on the manifest content of the program viewed. One in three (35%) involved recounting or describing what was just seen (e.g., repeating a joke on a Fat Albert special or going over the surgical procedures seen in a That's Incredible segment on liver transplants). Slightly fewer (26%) offered an analysis or opinion of what was just seen (e.g., saying that the officiating in a tournament basketball game was terrible or that the evening's episode of Three's Company was funny). One in ten (11%) involved the parent using the story as a springboard for guidance or value reinforcement (e.g., telling a child that the vulgarity heard in the movie Stripes was not something God wanted decent people to use or, based on a Little House on the Prairie incident, telling a child one should make it a habit of minding one's own business). One in twenty-five (4%) served as a reality check (e.g., asking if life centuries ago was like the sword fights seen in the movie Conan the Barbarian). The remaining conversations were scattered across categories: one in ten (11%) focused on the characters portrayed (e.g., how heavy Fat Albert was or how much of a meddler Mrs. Olsen was in the show Little House on the Prairie); 5% on the production aspects of the program (e.g., how the producers of Star Wars managed to make everything seem so realistic); 2% on the actors and actresses involved (e.g., how pretty the actress was on Remington Steele); 4% on comments somewhat related to the program (e.g., while viewing Stripes,

a veteran remembered something he experienced in the service and told of the incident). Finally, 2% of the conversations reported had nothing to do with the program watched (e.g., asking about a basketball score while watching the miniseries The Thorn Birds or discussing who was going to get the milk so the child could have something to drink). Table 4 summarizes the content of these interactions.)

Impact of Communication Patterns, Attitudes and Demographic Attributes

Parent-child TV-related conversations often differed on the basis of more general patterns and styles of communication employed in the family (measured here by the concept and socio orientation indices). Concept-oriented parents interacted more, talking about the programs watched (Factor 1) ($r=.28$, $p<.01$), relating the programs to reality (Factor 2) ($r=.23$, $p<.01$) as well as talking about other things while watching (Factor 3) ($r=.16$, $p<.01$).

Differences again emerged when families were placed into Chaffee and McLeod's fourfold typology. One-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) produced significant differences for Factors 1 and 2 and approached significance for Factor 3. Subsequent Neuman-Keuls' tests revealed differences ($p<.05$) primarily along the concept dimension. Pluralistic and to a lesser extent consensual parents reported talking more about the television programs watched ($F=8.06$ [3,299] $p<.01$). Pluralistic and consensual parents also appeared to more often relate what was seen to real life ($F=5.77$ [3,299] $p<.01$).

In addition to examing differences based on family communication patterns, parent-child conversations about television were examined as they might relate to age, gender, education, marital and work status of the parents, the parent's attitude about TV and children, the parent's own use

of TV, how much the parent reported typically watching with his/her child, the age and gender of the child, the child's use of TV, the number of children in the family and the number of working television sets in the home. Responses were not uniformly related to those variables.

Age of the parent was related to each of the three TV-related conversation factors; in each case, young parents reported more communication ($r=-.29$ for Factor 1, $r=-.31$ for Factor 2 and $r=-.25$ for Factor 3, all $p<.01$). Gender of the parent was related to talking about the TV shows watched ($r=.15$, $p<.01$); mothers reported doing this more often. Married parents as well as those who worked outside the home reported engaging in those conversations less frequently ($r=-.15$ and $-.14$, both $p<.01$). Working parents also talked less frequently about other topics while watching TV with their children ($r=-.17$, $p<.01$).

Age of the child was related to each of the TV communication factors. (Ages of the child and parent were related--$r=.46$, $p<.01$). Parents with younger children seemed to be more involved with their children's television experiences. They reported talking with their children more often about TV programs ($r=-.19$, $p<.01$), relating TV programs and characters to real life ($r=-.31$, $p<.01$) as well as talking more often while watching ($r=-.22$, $p<.01$). Those with more formal education more often talked about the TV shows watched ($r=.12$, $p<.05$) as well as attempted to relate what was just seen to real life ($r=.18$, $p<.01$). Responses generally were unaffected by how many children the parent had living at home at the time, how much the parent thought the child watched TV (either in general or with friends), how often the parent watched with the child, gender of the child or on the basis of number of television sets used by family members on a regular basis in the home.

Two parental attitudes about TV-related conversations related to these (perceived) patterns of communication. Parents who felt talking about TV with their child was important as well as those who enjoyed such conversations reported more frequent TV-related conversations. They talked more often about TV programs ($r=.45$ for those stressing important, $r=.40$ for those stressing enjoyment, both $p<.01$), more often related TV characters and events to real life ($r=.38$ and $r=.33$, both $p<.01$) as well as talked more often in general while watching ($r=.30$ and $r=.21$, both $p<.01$). As might be expected when considering the data presented on family communication patterns, parents who valued or enjoyed TV-related conversations tended to have higher concept orientations ($r=.21$ and $r=.22$, both $p<.01$). These attitudes were unrelated, however, to the socio dimension of family communication.

The communication, demographic and attitudinal variables described in the preceding paragraphs were entered into regression equations predicting the three factors underlying patterns of TV-related communication between parent and child. Multiple Rs were .63 for talking about the programs watched (Factor 1), .60 for talk linking TV to reality (Factor 2) and .40 for talk unrelated to what was being watched (Factor 3). Each variable's unique contribution when accounting for other variables generally was consistent with the bi-variate patterns just detailed. How important parents evaluated talking about TV with their children emerged as the most important predictor variable. Age of the parent also functioned as a significant predictor across all three factors. Other demographic and TV exposure items contributed infrequently. These regression analyses suggest, then, the need to place less emphasis on typical locator variables and more emphasis on attitudes and behavior more germane to TV viewing in the context

of the family. (Table 5 highlights the significant predictors of TV-related communication.)

Discussion

This study suggests that parent child co-viewing and interactions about television programs are somewhat limited. Neither co-viewing nor TV-related interactions appear to occur daily, although both occur more frequently in families with young children, in families whose parents value and enjoy talking about TV with their children and in families that emphasize the expression of ideas and opinions. Communicative interactions while viewing appear somewhat restricted as well, generally involving the mere reiteration of the content just viewed. These generalizations represent normative behaviors reported by parents. Nonetheless, a varying minority of parents reported frequent and substantive interactions with their children about television programs, either after the child viewed alone or with the parent; some parents seized the television opportunity to instill or reinforce values related to the content depicted. For some, then, television may serve as a source of active, communication interactions. For most, it more often seems to serve as a vehicle for sharing experiences only in the sense of doing something together.

The strongest correlates of TV-related communication between parents and children were the parent's attitudes about and reactions to the conversations themselves; parents who thought the conversations were important and enjoyable reported engaging in them most frequently. While the relationship across these variables is logical, it is difficult to determine whether these behaviors were the consequence of such attitudes or the reverse. Nonetheless, parental attitudes appeared to be better predictors of these interactions than the more generalized parent-child patterns of communi-

cation. Variance only along Chaffee and McLeod's concept dimension related to TV discussions. This typology, then, may be of somewhat limited value beyond political/current events/civic issues. Perhaps alternative, even more general, measures of parent-child communications are needed.

The limited nature of parent-child TV-related interactions could be interpreted as a reflection of many parents' ambivalent attitudes about television in the home. Having safely survived childhood with television themselves, many parents may feel their children's TV experiences require little parental intervention despite the content on. These data also could be used by those who support the position that television functions as a surrogate parent, serving to reduce some communicative obligations associated with parenting. A rival explanation, however, exists. Rather than focusing on parental attitudes, it emphasizes elements associated with the medium itself. First, most television programs may not provide the substance that demands discussion. When television does not break new ground, what is there to say about content that, with only minor variations, has been viewed countless times before? Second, even if the content was stimulating, the form of television does not provide ample opportunity for extended conversations; aside from commercial breaks (which do their best to maintain audience interest), television does not pause or easily permit audience communicative responsiveness. In short, the content and form of television serve to minimize rather than facilitate communication among coviewers. Experiments manipulating these factors could assess their impact on parent-child TV-related conversations.

Several assumptions appear to underlie studies such as this. The first is that television ought to be more than mere entertainment; that TV is dysfunctional in the family unless used within the communicative context of

the family unit. Why, however, should parents ask their children about what was watched without the parent? Why must TV-related conversations be long, interactive and substantive in order to be perceived of as qualitatively superior to a quiet, non-interactive co-viewing experience? The second assumption is that the number of conversations while television is on and the number of conversations about television while it's not being watched is less than the amount of conversation that would take place if the set were off or if the topic were something other than TV shows. How much do parents and children talk to each other throughout the day about anything? When parents and children talk about their day to each other, how often is it, too, merely perfunctory? The third assumption is that parental perceptions of such conversations are likely to reflect those of their children. How do children perceive of these conversations? How frequently do children think they occur? How important do children think they are? What conversations do they recall? How similar are their perceptions to those of their parents? While adults are easier to interview, the child's perspective may be equally valuable. In essence, then, the frequency, duration and quality of conversations about television may be no different than other non-television related conversations between parents and children. At the same time, perceptions of these conversations may be quite different across family members. These issues merit additional survey and experimental examination as researchers continue to collect data on television's role in the context of family relationships.

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Table 1: Parental Perceptions of TV-Related Conversations

	Frequency of Occurrence — Percent Responding					Person Initiating the Conversation — Percent Responding				
	Just About Never	Occasionally	Half the Time	Most of the Time	Just About Always	Parent	Child	Both	Varies	Other
Frequency child talks with parent about TV shows child views alone	11	42	16	18	13	12	68	14	5	1
Frequency parent & child talk while watching TV	7	36	19	20	18	23	26	39	11	1
Frequency parent & child talk while watching TV about other things besides what is on	19	45	19	11	6	29	23	35	9	4
Frequency parent & child talk about programs just viewed together when those shows are over	12	40	17	19	12	19	27	43	9	3
Frequency child simply describes what he/she watched without request for parental response	17	37	18	22	6					
Frequency child asks questions about what he/she viewed	14	47	15	15	9					
Frequency child tries to relate TV show to something in real life	22	44	12	16	7					
Frequency child refers to TV character on TV content when trying to explain something to parent	40	42	8	9	2					
Frequency parent asks questions about what was viewed	17	54	16	9	4					
Frequency parent tries to relate TV show to something in real life	24	44	13	15	5					

Table 2: Factor Analysis of TV-Related Communication Variables

Variable[a]	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Tellyou	.80	.12	.01
Talktvon	.57	.03	.50
Talkelse	-.15	.06	.87
Talkover	.78	.17	.01
Justtell	.20	.12	.38
Kidaskq	.43	.34	.25
Youaskq	.42	.19	.40
Kidreal	.21	.74	.12
Youreal	.16	.79	.00
Kidchar	.05	.70	.17
Percent of Variance Accounted for:	31.0	11.6	11.0

[a]where:

tellyou=frequency child talks to parent about TV watched without parent
talktvon=frequency parent and child talk while watching TV together
talkelse=frequency of parent-child communication while watching TV together about things besides what's on
talkover=frequency of parent-child communication about what was just watched together
justtell=frequency TV-related conversations only involve child talking without request for parental response
kidaskq=frequency parent asks child questions about what child just watched
youaskq=frequency parent asks child questions about what child just watched
kidreal=frequency child relates TV show to something in real life
youreal=frequency parent relates TV story to something in real life
kidchar=frequency child uses TV character or TV content to help explain something to parent

Table 3: Parental Recall of Previous Evening
Co-Viewing and Concurrent Conversations

Type of Show Watched[a]	Percent of Parent-Child Co-viewing[b]	Percent of Parent-Child Conversations	Average Number of Conversations Reported for Each Show Parent and Child Watch Together
Movies/Special Mini-series (e.g. The Thorn Birds)	21.2	25.1	2.1
Family Drama (e.g. Little House on the Prairie)	18.1	18.1	1.8
Situation Comedies (e.g. Mash, Love, Sidney)	18.1	6.7	0.7
Police/Detective (e.g. Vegas, Hart to Hart)	8.8	10.2	2.1
Sports	8.3	16.6	3.6
Reality Programming (e.g. That's Incredible)	5.7	4.1	1.3
Game Shows (e.g. Family Feud)	4.7	3.8	1.4
News (e.g. newscasts)	4.1	3.5	1.7
Children's Educational (e.g. Electric Company)	1.6	0.9	1.0
Situation Drama (e.g. Dallas)	1.6	1.2	1.3
Science (e.g. Nova)	1.6	2.0	2.3
Variety	1.6	2.3	2.7
Religious (e.g. The 700 Club)	1.0	2.0	3.5
Science Fiction	0.5	1.2	4.0
Talk Shows (e.g. Johnny Carson)	0.5	0.3	1.0
Other	2.6	2.0	1.4

[a]Several other types of programs initially were included (public affairs and music/arts). Since no parent reported viewing either with his/her child the previous evening, they were excluded from this table.

[b]Since some parents watched more than one show with their children the previous evening, percentages for each program type do not necessarily represent the percent of parents in the sample watching with their children. For example, if a parent reported watching two situation comedies with his/her child, the parent was recorded twice for that program type.

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Table 4: Parent Child Conversations
While Watching Television Together

Topic of Comments	Percent of all Comments
Storyline/plot/issues	
iteration/description	35
analysis/opinion	26
guidance/teaching	11
reality check	4
Production qualities	
analysis/opinion	5
guidance/teaching	
reality check	
Talk about the characters	
analysis/opinion	7
guidance/teaching	
reality check	4
Other comments related to the show	4
Talk unrelated to the show	2

Table 5: Contributors to Parent-Child TV-Related Conversations

Demographic, Attitudinal and Family Communications Pattern Measures[a]	Parent-Child TV Related Communication Factors		
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
	Parent-Child Communication about TV Programs	Parent-Child Communication linking TV to Reality	General Parent-Child Communication
	B	B	B
Kidage	-	.17	-
Kidsex	-	-	-
Adultsex	-	-	-
Adultage	-.18	-.18	-.21
Marry	-.15	-	-
Ed	-	.14	-
Work	-.12	-	.15
Nkids	-	-	-
Ntvsets	-	-	-
Kidtv	-	-	-
Kidtvfrd	-	.16	-
Kidtvyou	-	-	-
Adulttv	-	-	-
Better	-	-	-
Impt	.27	.22	.23
Enjoy	.21	.13	-
Socio	-	-	-
Concept	.13	.12	-
Multiple R[c]	.59	.56	.40
Multiple R[d]	.63	.60	.47

[a]where:

kidage=age of child
kidsex=gender of child
adultsex=gender of adult
adultage=age of parent interviewed
marry=marital status
ed=level of education
work=parent's work status
nkids=number of children
ntvsets=number of TV sets in home
kidtv=amount of TV watched by child
kidtvfrd=amount of TV child watches with friends
kidtvyou=amount of TV child watches
adulttv=amount of TV parent watches
better=attitude about children better off with/without TV
impt=perceived importance of parent-child TV-related conversations
enjoy=enjoyment of parent-child TV-related conversations
socio=socio dimension of family communications
concept=concept dimension of family communications

[c]Multiple R for variables with significant F (p .05) when all variables were entered into each equation

[d]Multiple R when all variables are entered into each equation

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